2019 STATE TOTAL COVERED POPULATIONS UNDER THE DIGITAL EQUITY ACT OF 2021

Quick Guide

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U.S. Census Bureau
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Department of Commerce

Overview

The Census Bureau and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) are working together to help States promote the achievement of digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for States to implement programs that will drive the adoption and meaningful use of high-speed internet by residents of those States.

The Digital Equity Act of 2021 was established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Sections 60301-60307). The State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program is the first of three Digital Equity Act programs that will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Under the legislation, NTIA will allocate awards to participating States (including the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico) based on their populations, demographics, and availability and adoption of broadband. The funding allocation from the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program is comprised of three portions:

1. 50 percent based on the population of the State in proportion to the total population of all eligible States.
2. 25 percent based on the number of individuals in the State who are members of the covered populations in proportion to the total number of individuals in all eligible States who are in covered populations.
3. 25 percent based on the comparative lack of availability and adoption of broadband in the State in proportion to the lack of availability and adoption of all eligible States.

Total Covered Populations

The data provided here give insight as to how the funding allocation to each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico is calculated. The Digital Equity Act of 2021 defines "covered populations" (item 2 in the funding formula above) as the following:

- Individuals who live in covered households (household income no more than 150 percent of federal poverty threshold).
- Aging individuals.
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correction facility.
- Veterans.
- Individuals with disabilities.
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy.
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

The underlined total covered populations for each State is the population with one or more of the eight characteristics listed above in the Digital Equity Act of 2021.

Data

This data product is a collection of tabulations from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year file, publicly available estimates on adult literacy from the National Center for Educational Statistics, data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on fixed broadband deployment, and measures of Internet and computer device use from the 2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey[1].

The ACS is a nationally representative survey with data on the characteristics of the U.S. population. The sample is selected from all counties and county-equivalents and has a sample size of about 3.5 million housing units each year. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation and the communities within it.

The total covered populations estimates for each State are drawn from the 2019 ACS 1-year file. Additionally, data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on adult skills on literacy are used to estimate low levels of literacy and data from the 2015-2019 5-year file ACS are used to estimate the rural population.

This data product also contains estimates for each of the eight covered populations. Since individuals may be a member of more than one of the covered populations, the estimates for the eight covered populations do not sum to the total covered population. The percentages for the eight covered populations do not add up to the percentage of total covered population in each State for the same reason.

The funding formula for the Digital Equity Act of 2021 also uses data on comparative lack of availability and adoption of broadband in the State (item 3 in the formula). For the availability part of this allocation, NTIA uses the percent of population in each State who live in places where fixed broadband service with advertised speeds of at least 25 Mbps for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads is not available. These data are from the Fourteenth Broadband Deployment Report released by the FCC on January 19, 2021.

While FCC data on broadband deployment is used to measure availability, the NTIA uses indicators on broadband subscription, internet use, and use of computing devices to gauge broadband adoption. The final inputs to the Digital Equity Act of 2021 funding formula are measures pertaining to broadband adoption and are drawn from the 2019 ACS 1-year file and the 2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey, as follows:

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[1] The NTIA Internet Use Survey is a periodic supplement to the U.S. Census Bureau's monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement measures Internet and computing device use in the United States.

- Percentage of population in each State who live in households that lack any type of computing device and/or a broadband service subscription (2019 ACS 1-year estimates).
- Percentage of population in each State who do not use the Internet at all (2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey).
- Percentage of population in each State who do not use any of the following: 1) desktop computer, 2) laptop computer, or 3) tablet computer (2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey).

Definitions

Unless otherwise noted, all covered population estimates and the total covered population for each State are based on the 2019 ACS 1-year file. To estimate the total covered population by State, each respondent in the ACS who is a member of one or more of the eight covered populations is tabulated in the State's total covered population.

Covered Households
Households with income no more than 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

Aging Individuals
60 years and older.

Veterans
All persons aged 18 years and older who served in the armed forces in the past but are no longer on active duty.

Individuals with a language barrier
English learners or have low literacy levels. English learners are defined as individuals who speak a language other than English at home and speak English less than "very well."

The ACS does not measure literacy. In the total covered populations tabulation, literacy status is assigned to each 2019 ACS person record using proportions of low literacy levels from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).[2]

To impute literacy status on ACS records for the total covered populations tabulation, the national level distribution of low literacy (at Level 1 or below of literacy proficiency) by

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[2] Literacy proficiency is measured by reading comprehension assessment scores that range from 0-500. The scores fall into proficiency levels "Below Level 1" and "Level 1" through "Level 5." Below Level 1 is the lowest proficiency, and Level 5 is the highest. See a description of each literacy proficiency level used by NCES here.

educational attainment[3] is combined with state and county proportions of low literacy from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy.[4] For each ACS person record, low literacy status is assigned probabilistically using the derived county proportions by educational attainment[5].

Separate estimates for the State percentage of adults with low literacy levels included in these data are the published values from the PIAAC State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Racial and ethnic minorities
The population who identify as a race other than White alone or as Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Living in a rural area
The rural population, as defined by the Digital Equity Act of 2021, is the population living outside of cities and towns with more than 20,000 residents or living outside larger cities and towns with more than 50,000 residents and their surrounding urban areas. Cities and towns with more than 20,000 residents are identified using Census Designated Place (CDP) population estimates from the 2015-2019 5-year ACS file.

A CDP is a statistical entity representing closely settled, unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name (2018, 83 FR 56290). Incorporated places, local areas with incorporation status that provide full government services, are considered CDPs in ACS data, and the boundaries for the CDP coincide with the city's legal boundaries.

Similarly, cities and towns with populations that exceed the 50,000 threshold are identified using Census Designated Place (CDP) population estimates from the 2015-2019 5-year ACS file. The surrounding urban areas associated with the larger cities and towns with over 50,000 residents are identified with unique urban areas codes assigned by the Census Bureau that group together related urban areas. Since the ACS is a survey and is subject to sampling error,[6]

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[3] The national table by educational attainment is from the 2017 U.S. Household file, Ages 16-65 file. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC): Institute of Education Sciences (IES). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

[4] 2012/2014/2017 State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC): Institute of Education Sciences (IES). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).,

[5] Estimates for Puerto Rico and its municipios are not available in the PIAAC data. To assign literacy status for ACS records in Puerto Rico, we used national proportions of literacy proficiency level by educational attainment.

[6] Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The data in this product have margins of error at the 90 percent confidence level. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus

the upper bound of the 90 percent confidence interval for a population estimate is used to identify places that exceed the 20,000 and 50,000 population thresholds, respectively.

<u>Incarcerated in non-Federal facilities</u>
All persons in State prisons, local jails and other municipal confinement facilities, correctional residential facilities, and correctional facilities intended for juveniles.

Links

State total covered population estimates

Data

[File Layout](File%20Layout)

[Digital Equity Act Population Viewer](Digital%20Equity%20Act%20Population%20Viewer)

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the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value. In addition to sampling variability, the ACS estimates are subject to nonsampling error (for a discussion of nonsampling variability, see [ACS Technical Documentation](ACS%20Technical%20Documentation)). The effect of nonsampling error is not represented in these data.